

Child Safeguarding Policy

Terre des Hommes
Germany e.V.

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1. Purpose of the Policy

Promoting, protecting and upholding the rights of children is a core part of the mandate of Terre des Hommes Germany.

Terre des Hommes recognises that millions of children worldwide are exposed to some form of violence. We also acknowledge that some children are at an increased and intersectionally heightened risk of experiencing violence – such as children with disabilities, girls, LGBTQIA+[1] children and children whose parents or guardians belong to the LGBTQIA+ community, children who grow up or stay in institutional care, and children affected by emerging crises. Terre des Hommes' position is clear and unequivocal: Violence against children is never acceptable or excusable!

Terre des Hommes is committed to child safeguarding. With this Child Safeguarding Policy and its corresponding procedural guidelines, the organisation seeks to ensure that all children who are under the direct or indirect responsibility of Terre des Hommes are kept safe and protected. Terre des Hommes implements a »zero-tolerance strategy« towards any form of violence in all of its work.

The Child Safeguarding Policy of Terre des Hommes is based on the rights and well-being of children as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989. Terre des Hommes uses the term »child« to refer to all individuals who have not yet reached the age of 18. Terre des Hommes also works with young people over the age of 18 in the context of its programmes. Our commitment to safeguard all of them from violence applies equally and is governed by the policy on »Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, Harassment, and Harm«[2].

Terre des Hommes Germany e.V.[3] belongs to the Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF), and meets the minimum standards set out in the TDHIF Safeguarding Policy[4]. Via the TDHIF, Terre des Hommes Germany is a member of »Keeping Children Safe«[5], a network of organisations that have pledged to protect children through upholding international safeguarding standards.

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[1] LGBTQIA+ is an English acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Agender or Asexual. The plus sign (+) signifies that society is even more diverse in terms of gender identities and sexual orientations beyond those explicitly listed.
[2] https://tdhgermany.sharepoint.com/sites/ChildProtection/SitePages/Safeguarding.aspx
[3] »e.V.« stands for »eingetragener Verein«, meaning »registered association« under German law.
[4] TDHIF Safeguarding Policy: https://terredeshommes.org/who-we-are/#commitments
[5] https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/

Terre des Hommes acknowledges that the organisation and partner organisations are responsible for safeguarding children in their work and ensures that

- Staff, visitors as well as members and other volunteers do not harm children;
- Activities and programmes do no harm to children;
- Children are not exposed to the risk of suffering and violence.
- All concerns regarding the safety of children with whom Terre des Hommes works directly or indirectly are responded to immediately, and relevant authorities are involved, and necessary measures are taken.[6]

2. Scope and Extended Application

2.1 Scope

This policy applies to all staff and Executive Board members of TDH. Staff members of the German National Head Office of TDH are additionally bound by the works agreements on »Compliance«.

In order to ensure the best interests of children and strengthen the credibility and integrity of Terre des Hommes, all persons listed above are expected to respect and adhere to the principles and behavioural standards outlined in this policy – both within and outside their professional roles. Any violation will be treated as a breach of this policy.

2.2 Extended application

The content of this policy also applies to all staff members in regional and country offices, regardless of the type of contract. It is provided as a binding policy document in all such locations.

Furthermore, the provisions of this policy must be incorporated in all contractual agreements with external partners and companies, contractors, consultants, and other professionals working on behalf of Terre des Hommes. The responsible partners must ensure that individual employees of these entities are contractually required to conscientiously fulfil their obligations arising from the agreement. Child safeguarding regulations must be shared with these partners before any cooperation begins.

[6] Direct work with children means that children are the primary target group of an activity or project and that adults are in direct contact with them. Indirect work with children refers to situations where children are not the direct target group but still benefit from a project, are occasionally present during project activities, or may be reached through members of the target group, such as siblings or members of a household or community.

For institutional funding recipients abroad, contractual agreements must include child safeguarding principles as a binding standard.

3. Definitions

In all countries and across all social classes, in all societies and social spaces, children experience violence. The causes of violence are multifaceted, and the strategies to address it are complex. Violence constitutes an abuse of power, perpetrated both in interpersonal relationships and through unjust systems. In society, violence is structurally embedded and systemically reinforced through systems of oppression such as patriarchy, adultism, racism, and ableism.

Terre des Hommes remains critically aware of these power asymmetries in the contexts in which we operate – and continuously reflects on them within the organisation itself.

3.1 Forms of violence against children

A foundational basis for Terre des Hommes' work is the »UN Convention on the Rights of the Child«. Articles 19, 34, and 39 of this Convention specifically relate to the safeguarding of children from violence, as does the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.

In particular, Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for:

»...legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse«.

Specifically in relation to Article 19, General Comment No. 13 (2011) issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, emphasises »the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence«. It draws on the UN World Report on Violence against Children (2006), which outlines various forms of harm against children.

Terre des Hommes also adopts this categorisation and additionally includes violence committed through digital media. Hence, Terre des Hommes differentiates between **six main types of violence against children**, defined as follows:

TDH adopts the **World Health Organization** (WHO)´s **general definition of violence**:

> »The intentional use of physical force or power, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.«

Physical violence is the actual or potential physical injury to a child or the failure to prevent the child from physical harm. This includes hitting, kicking, scratching, shaking, throwing, burning, scalding, drowning, or suffocating a child. It also includes forcing children to adopt uncomfortable postures or deliberately exposing them to illness. Physical violence causes both physical and psychological harm.

Sexual violence includes the coercion or manipulation of a child to take part in sexual acts, regardless of whether the child understands the nature of these acts or appears to consent to them. This encompasses all forms of sexual acts, such as boundary-violating or abusive touching, sexual harassment, rape, intercourse, and similar behaviours. Sexualised violence also includes non-contact forms of abuse, such as the use of sexualised language, prolonged or intrusive staring at children, exposing them to pornographic material, watching sexual acts together, or manipulating children into engaging in sexualised behaviour.

Emotional or psychological abuse includes persistent or severe verbal assaults, humiliation, harassment, or rejection of children. Such treatment can lead children to feel worthless, unloved, and unwanted, resulting in serious and long-term harm to their emotional and behavioural development. Emotional abuse also encompasses expectations placed on a child that are inappropriate for their age or developmental stage. It includes actions that deliberately induce fear, anxiety, or feelings of guilt. Harmful traditional practices –such as female genital mutilation– cause not only violent physical harm and lifelong health consequences, but also lead to significant psychological trauma.

Exploitation describes the commercial or other use of the child through activities that the child performs for the benefit of a third partly and which impair their physical or mental well-being. These activities include forced labour, involvement in criminal acts, being forced to provide services such as begging, sexual exploitation of children, as well as any form of work that constitutes economic exploitation. Exploited children typically do not attend school regularly or at all, which severely impacts their psychosocial development and future life prospects.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs. This includes the absence of emotional support and affection, abandonment, or the failure to protect a child from harm. Neglect also includes inadequate supervision and denial of

essential medical care and education, despite the caregivers having the resources and knowledge to provide them.

Digital violence describes various forms of violence against children committed through digital media and communication technologies such as social media, webcams, chat rooms, or artificial intelligence. Perpetrators use these tools to exploit, harass, insult, or shame children sexually or economically. Hands-off forms of violence –those that do not involve direct physical contact– can be just as harmful as hands-on violence. Such experiences can lead to sleep disturbances, depression, and even suicidal or aggressive behaviour in children.

Different forms of violence often occur simultaneously and may vary depending on factors such as sex, gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnic background, and physical or cognitive disabilities. While perpetrators are most often adults, children themselves may also engage in acts of violence - either consciously or unconsciously.

4. Participation and Commitment of All Stakeholders to the Prevention and Elimination of Violence

The Child Safeguarding Policy serves as a binding framework for all Terre des Hommes staff at the head office and in regional offices, for members of the executive board, cooperation partners, and partner organisations both in Germany and abroad. Together with their own child safeguarding policies, this forms a consistent and coordinated system for protecting children from violence.

4.1 Principles Underpinning the Child Safeguarding Policy

Terre des Hommes is guided by the following principles and values in its child safeguarding efforts:

1. All children have an **equal right to protection** and to the promotion of their well-being. They should have the chance to play an active role in society – regardless of their ethnicity, social and economic background, age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, or beliefs.
2. Every child safeguarding measure must be undertaken in the **best interests of the child**. Terre des Hommes is committed to ensuring that all children are protected from violence across all its programmes and activities.
3. Terre des Hommes **informs both salaried and volunteer staff** comprehensively about its internal safeguarding measures and fosters a culture of protection by offering training, continuing education, guidance, and support. All staff and volunteers are empowered and encouraged to actively advocate for child safeguarding and to take responsibility.

4. **Child participation** is a right and an essential principle for guaranteeing child safeguarding. For this reason, we encourage children to take part in the development and implementation of child safeguarding standards.
5. All information and **reports** that raise **concerns** about a child's safety and protection are taken seriously. Terre des Hommes or the implementing partner organisation ensures that appropriate measures are taken to protect the child. Every incident is investigated, and appropriate action is taken against the alleged perpetrator. This may include reporting the case to law enforcement agencies and child protection authorities.
6. Effective child safeguarding requires **dialogue and reflection**. Terre des Hommes therefore maintains ongoing exchange with partner organisations, other cooperation partners, authorities, government agencies, ministries, and professionals mandated with child protection responsibilities. In this context, Terre des Hommes shares its policies and guidelines with others and remains open to feedback of any kind.
7. Terre des Hommes operates in contexts shaped by **power asymmetries** and remains continuously aware of these dynamics. The organisation actively reflects on existing imbalances –including within its own structures– to prevent any potential misuse of power.
8. TDH promotes **broad awareness** of child safeguarding. Solutions to protecting children need to reflect the specific culture and existing realities in the environment of all concerned. However, cultural factors can never be used as an excuse for violence against children.

4.2 Principles of Conduct Toward Children

Terre des Hommes expects all who are directly or indirectly in contact with its work to:

1. Respect and uphold the inviolability of the dignity of all children.
2. Refrain from any form of violence against children, including the use of violence as a means of discipline.
3. Apply the »Two-Adult Rule«, that during all Terre des Hommes-related activities involving children, at least two adult caregivers preferably of different gender identities must be present, or children must each be accompanied by a person with parental authority or another authorised adult caregiver. Any deviation from this rule due to special circumstances must remain an exception and must be clarified in advance with the TDH management or board level.
4. Act with kindness and respect, being mindful of how one's behaviour, speech, and actions affect the child. Take any signs of discomfort, rejection, or lack of consent seriously and respond appropriately to the situation. In general, maintain high

standards of conduct in the presence of children and act as a role model in interactions with others.

5. Dress appropriately and behave with cultural sensitivity when visiting or interacting with children, families, communities, and programmes, or when working with children.
6. As an adult, refrain from establishing private contacts with minors participating in TDH-related events or projects, and not to enter into intimate relationships with project participants of any age. Terre des Hommes does not to accept the marriage of staff members to minors, even if such marriages are legal in the respective country.
7. Be aware that children are among the most vulnerable members of society. Children need recognition and affection. Adults should respond with empathy and clarity, while also setting respectful boundaries – including situations when a child displays behaviour that may be perceived as provocative, sexually suggestive, aggressive, or resistant. It is the responsibility of the adult to maintain professional conduct and to avoid any situations that may appear inappropriate or open to misinterpretation.
8. Refrain from independently providing care or support to children with complex or comorbid issues unless you possess specific professional expertise and are authorized to do so. Such children must be referred to a qualified and trustworthy organisation or team of professionals.
9. Respond immediately to all complaints, allegations, and reports from children with respect to any form of violence to ensure the child receives timely and appropriate assistance. Terre des Hommes' designated Safeguarding Focal Points must be informed, or a report must be made through the TDH reporting platform[7].

5. Participation and Commitment of the Organisation in Preventing and Addressing Violence

Internal measures:

- The Executive Board bears overall responsibility for the implementation of the standards outlined in this policy and its procedural guidelines. It incorporates them into its core work, ensures that the necessary resources are made available, and actively supports all levels of the organisation in their implementation.
- Regional Coordinators ensure that the standards and procedural guidelines are applied, monitored, and that reported incidents and violations are dealt with appropriately in their respective regions.

[7] https://terre-des-hommes.hinweis.digital/?lang=en

- Staff at the management level serve as role models, actively promote awareness of child safeguarding violations, ensure that all staff in Germany as well as in regional and country offices are familiar with the policy and its procedures, and raise awareness of potentially concerning situations.
- The Executive Board ensures that appropriate security settings are in place for the use of the organisation's internal internet services. It also prohibits employees from accessing content that is criminal, defamatory, racist, sexually explicit, or glorifying violence in the workplace.
- The People & Culture Team at the Head Office, together with the Regional Coordinators, ensures that all required steps outlined in the Terre des Hommes Child Safeguarding Policy and its procedural guidelines are followed during the recruitment of new staff. The Policy is handed out to new employees upon hiring. Child Safeguarding measures in the recruitment process include a review of application documents and an assessment of the applicant's attitude toward the policy during interviews, reference checks, and/or submission of a police clearance certificate8.
- The involvement and empowerment of children and young people across all programme regions is guided by specific principles. These principles, along with binding measures for ensuring safe child participation, are outlined in the Child Safeguarding procedural guidelines. They include preventive measures to protect participating children both online and offline, and establishment of complaint mechanisms that enable every child to provide feedback. It also includes measures for Terre des Hommes staff to respond promptly to any reported violations of safe child participation.
- When portraying TDH´s work in media content, all staff members must adhere to child safeguarding standards. This applies to the use of imagery, photography, filming, conducting interviews with children, and publications, as well as uploading content to websites and sharing through digital or other media channels.
- All staff are encouraged to report any violations of this policy or concerns as early as possible. Accessible and confidential complaints mechanisms are in place for this purpose, as outlined in the complaints policy[9], with particular reference to the digital reporting platform[10]. Designated persons are responsible for ensuring that affected children receive immediate support and assistance.

External measures:

- TDH ensures that the principles of this policy are a mandatory component of all cooperation agreements with partner organisations.

[8] In Germany, the submission of an extended police clearance certificate is required.
[9] https://tdhgermany.sharepoint.com/sites/DataProtection/SitePages/I-have-a-complaint.-What-should-I-do-.aspx
[10] https://terre-des-hommes.hinweis.digital/?lang=en

- TDH ensures that every partner organisation has an appropriate Child Safeguarding Policy and reports every incident involving a contracted individual. Partner organisations receive support as needed and as resources allow to develop and implement relevant policies.
- Regular risk assessments are conducted to prevent and minimize the risks of violence against children in collaboration with partner organisations and within local communities. Terre des Hommes ensures that both a Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment of the project partner and the project itself are carried out.
- In humanitarian situations, the risk of harm to children and the disruption of child safeguarding systems is significantly heightened. It is therefore essential that partner organisations commit to implementing institutional safeguarding standards for children and vulnerable persons in the context of humanitarian emergencies. These standards complement the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action established by the global network »The Alliance«[11]. TDH supports partner organisations in the adoption and contextual adaptation of Child Safeguarding standards for humanitarian settings.
- Cooperation partners (such as companies, foundations, NGOs, ministries, etc.) who, together with Terre des Hommes, financially support projects involving children, as well as external service providers collaborating with Terre des Hommes, must commit to child safeguarding as soon as their activities involve direct contact with children or their personal data. This is set out in the respective cooperation agreements and anchored in the »Guidelines for Accepting Donations and Cooperating with Companies and Foundations«[12].
- TDH ensures that Child Safeguarding is upheld during all visits to TDH projects. TDH staff responsible for organising such visits must ensure that visitors sign an appropriate Code of Conduct[13] in advance.

6. Handling of Violations, Complaints, and Sanctions

6.1 Reporting and Confidentiality

If there is suspicion, concern, or knowledge of a violation of this policy, all individuals covered by the policy are required to report the matter without delay via the TDH reporting platform.[14]

TDH acts in accordance with the (German) »Whistleblower Protection Act« and the »General Data Protection Regulation«. The principles of confidentiality, data protection, and the

[11] https://alliancecpha.org/en
[12] Resolved by the general assembly on 23/09/2023
[13] https://tdhgermany.sharepoint.com/:u:/r/sites/ChildProtection/SitePages/Verhaltenskodex-bei-Besuch-von-TDH-Programmen.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=oW64h7
[14] https://terre-des-hommes.hinweis.digital/?lang=en

protection of reporting persons apply, as outlined in the TDH complaints policy[15].

6.2 Sanctions

All reported concerns, suspicions, and violations are investigated. During the investigation, staff or other involved persons may be relieved of their duties.

Any proven violation of this policy, intentional failure to report, or knowing false allegations that can be proven to be malicious will result in disciplinary or contractual consequences within the applicable legal framework.

If a partner organisation demonstrably and culpably fails to implement the required safeguarding standards, or is found to have committed serious misconduct, payments to the partner may be suspended. Termination of the Cooperation Agreement may follow as a next step.

7. Contact Person and Safeguarding Committee

7.1 Contact Persons

As part of the overall safeguarding framework, the Executive Board appoints a qualified individual at the head office, titled the ´Global Safeguarding Focal Point´. This person is responsible for both Child Safeguarding and for the protection against sexual violence, exploitation, harassment, and harm against adults. In addition, each Regional Coordinator, in collaboration with the programme executive board, appoints a qualified person for their respective region to serve as the regional safeguarding focal point.

Within their respective areas of responsibility, the safeguarding focal points are in charge of coordinating safeguarding matters. These responsibilities are part of their official job description and include:

- Providing advice and raising awareness among all individuals covered by this policy,
- Supporting the organisation and delivery of relevant training and capacity building,
- Assisting management in ensuring, monitoring, and continuously improving the implementation of the policy in the organisational structure and workflows,
- Holding the right to access relevant information and to be duly informed in all cases involving complaints and reported violations,
- Advising on reported violations,
- Usually serving as a member of the case management team,

[15] https://tdhgermany.sharepoint.com/sites/DataProtection/SitePages/I-have-a-complaint.-What-should-I-do-.aspx

- Reporting the number of complaints for anonymised inclusion in the annual report.

The Global Focal Point for Safeguarding also coordinates the joint work of all Safeguarding Focal Points.

7.2 Committee

A Safeguarding Committee is established both at the head office and in each region to provide advice and support in the implementation of this policy. In regions without a regional structure or those assigned to the head office, the head office committee assumes these responsibilities. The composition and responsibilities of the committees are defined in the internal rules of procedure.

Resolution of the policy in its present version on: 28 May 2025

This policy is reviewed annually to assess the need for updates and, if necessary, revised based on feedback and practical experience. Any amendment to this policy may only be made following consultation and agreement with the Works Council.